

## More government is simply not the answer

*By Rep. Mike Pence*

The strength of our nation is not found in the halls of Congress or in the offices of government bureaucrats. The enduring strength of the United States of America lies in the good will and common sense of the American people. It is discovered at dinner tables, churches, coffee shops and assembly halls across this great land.

This year began much like last year. Our nation continues to struggle through a difficult recession. Small businesses are trying desperately to keep their doors open. Workers worry that their job will be the latest casualty of this tough economy. And the American people still expect the federal government to get spending under control and to take decisive action to get our country moving again.

We need leadership that will lift the burden on struggling families and that respects our cherished national values. Washington should not enact bad public policy that will lead to more job losses and further economic decline.

Sadly, what we have seen instead are more of the same policies that got us into this mess. Voters rejected runaway federal spending under Republican control and they listened to Democrats who promised a new direction.

But this past year, Democrat leaders have unveiled one proposal after another that grows government and leaves a mountain of debt on the backs of our children. Last year was a record year for federal spending (\$3.52 trillion) and deficits (\$1.4 trillion). Today, every man, woman and child bears the burden of more than \$39,000 in federal debt.

Our fiscal future is in crisis and there is not a lot of comfort to be found in recent headlines. It is reported that Democrat leaders will soon bring before Congress a bill to increase the debt limit by an historic \$1.9 trillion, a tacit admission that they have abandoned any effort to restore sanity to the federal budget.

Likewise, the president is expected to announce that his administration is getting serious about deficit spending. Yet the president continues to advocate for a government takeover of healthcare that will cost taxpayers more than \$1 trillion and his 10-year budget plan will raise our debt by \$14.6 trillion! We are witnessing an absence of leadership and our children will pay the price.

The American people deserve better than a \$787 billion so-called stimulus plan full of wasteful liberal spending priorities. They deserve better than a national energy tax and a government takeover of healthcare written by special interests behind closed doors. And they deserve better than more political posturing over fiscal responsibility.

The frustration we have witnessed across the country is neither directed at one political party nor even one policy proposal. People are fed up with a culture of borrowing, bailouts and takeovers that has consumed Washington.

It is time that we chart a course for the country that puts the people first. It starts by getting our priorities straight and focusing 100 percent on getting this economy moving again and healthcare reform that actually lowers costs by increasing competition.

Last January, as Democrats rushed through Congress their flawed stimulus bill, House Republicans responded with our own economic recovery plan. Our plan would have delivered immediate tax relief to working families and small businesses - the same principles that have always led to economic prosperity.

When the votes were counted, Democrats defeated our proposal and were stunned as every House Republican said no to more government and more debt. Republicans continue to offer solutions to address our challenges. We are ready to work for energy independence, fight for lower healthcare costs and fix our economy, but only in a way that puts the American people first. That is why we have introduced American solutions to the challenges we face, not government solutions. We proposed a comprehensive strategy to achieve energy independence, commonsense reform to lower healthcare costs, and a responsible federal budget that lowers deficits without raising taxes. House Republicans will seize every opportunity to bring these positive ideas before the president, the Congress and the people.

The path to economic prosperity does not run along Pennsylvania Avenue nor end at the doorstep of the United States Congress. It runs through the entrepreneurial spirit of the American people. Wednesday, the president will have an opportunity to present his views regarding the state of our union.

For the sake of our future, I hope he finds that the strength of our union rests not with the government but where it always has - with the people.

*Pence is chairman of the House Republican Conference.*